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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002756

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SUBJECT: FATAH LEADER ON HAMAS CELL IN JERUSALEM

REF: A) TEL AVIV 4184 B) JERUSALEM 2729

CLASSIFIED BY: ACTING PRINCIPAL OFFICER MARY DRAPER, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: A SENIOR FATAH OFFICIAL AND PLC MEMBER CRITICIZED HAMAS FOR CONDUCTING OPERATIONS IN JERUSALEM, SAYING THIS WAS PART OF A WIDER COMPETITION BETWEEN FATAH AND HAMAS OVER WHICH DIRECTION TO TAKE THE RESISTANCE. THE DISCOVERY OF A HAMAS CELL IN EAST JERUSALEM WILL COMPLICATE THE ONGOING CEASE-FIRE TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES, IN HIS VIEW. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) HATEM ABDEL QADER, A MEMBER OF THE PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FOR JERUSALEM AND FATAH'S HIGH COMMITTEE FOR THE WEST BANK, TOLD POLCHIEF 8/22 THAT HAMAS OPERATIONS INSIDE JERUSALEM VIOLATED AN UNDERSTANDING WITH FATAH NOT TO CONDUCT SUCH ACTIVITIES IN JERUSALEM. RECENT REVELATIONS OF A HAMAS CELL IN EAST JERUSALEM COULD NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE PLIGHT OF THE 220,000 PALESTINIANS LIVING IN EAST JERUSALEM, AND WOULD CERTAINLY COMPLICATE THE BROADER, ONGOING CEASE-FIRE TALKS BETWEEN FATAH AND HAMAS, HE SAID. FATAH'S POLICY ON JERUSALEM, ACCORDING TO ABDEL QADER, HAS BEEN TO EMPLOY NON-VIOLENT MEANS TO PRESS THE GOI ON JERUSALEM-SPECIFIC ISSUES (I.E., HOME DEMOLITIONS, LAND AND ID CONFISCATIONS, EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE).

13. (C) ABDEL QADER SAID THAT THE PRESENCE OF A HAMAS CELL IN JERUSALEM WAS A MANIFESTATION OF A LARGER ONGOING COMPETITION BETWEEN FATAH AND HAMAS OVER RESISTANCE TACTICS. HAMAS WAS IDEOLOGICAL AND MAXIMALIST, WHILE FATAH WAS PRAGMATIC AND FOCUSED; THAT'S WHY FATAH WAS NOW PURSUING A CEASE-FIRE (COMMENT: ALBEIT ONE LIMITED GEOGRAPHICALLY TO INSIDE GREEN LINE ISRAEL -- SEE REFTELS). ON ARAFAT'S ORDERS, FATAH HAD HAD TO THREATEN TO EXPEL PARTY MEMBERS FOR TAKING WEAPONS AND MONEY FROM HAMAS AND PIJ -- RESOURCES THAT ORIGINATED FROM TEHRAN, HE SAID. IN ADDITION, ABDEL QADER SAID HE WAS PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN WHAT HE TERMED "THE BATTLE FOR THE CHILDREN" -- A FATAH EFFORT TO COUNTER UNDUE HAMAS INFLUENCE IN THE SCHOOLS THAT WAS RADICALIZING PALESTINIAN YOUTH BY EXPOSING THEM TO DAILY PROPAGANDA ABOUT ALLEGED ISRAELI ATROCITIES. "THE LAST THING WE WANT IS A RADICAL ISLAMIC STATE LIKE IRAN," HE SAID.

14. (C) ABDEL QADER EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT FATAH WOULD PREVAIL. FIRST, THE HAMAS LEADERSHIP ITSELF WAS NOW DIVIDED OVER RESISTANCE TACTICS, A RIFT THAT FATAH WOULD ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT, HE SAID. SECOND, MOST PALESTINIANS WERE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH HAMAS' SOCIO-POLITICAL PLATFORM (EVEN IF MANY ADMIRERED THE PARTY'S "STEADFASTNESS"). "LET US HAVE ELECTIONS AND LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES -- YOU WILL SEE, WE WILL WIN."

15. (C) COMMENT: EAST JERUSALEM'S PALESTINIANS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN HARDER TO RECRUIT FOR TERRORIST OPERATIONS BECAUSE OF THEIR PRIVILEGED POSITION VIS-A-VIS WEST BANK PALESTINIANS. NOT SUBJECT TO TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, THEY ARE ECONOMICALLY BETTER OFF, AND ARE ENTITLED TO ISRAELI SOCIAL SERVICES THAT, WHILE SHORT OF WHAT ISRAELI CITIZENS ENJOY, ARE SUPERIOR TO THOSE THE PA PROVIDES TO PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. THAT SAID, THE DISCOVERY OF A HAMAS CELL IN JERUSALEM IS A REMINDER THAT VIOLENT RESISTANCE STILL RESONATES AMONG SOME HERE, AND A SIGN OF THE CONTINUING DISUNITY AMONG PALESTINIAN POLITICAL FACTIONS ON ACCEPTABLE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT.

DRAPER